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People in Motion: Politics of Migration Policy

Principal Investigator: Irfan Nooruddin

Shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, President George W. Bush issued a directive dealing with the role of immigration policy in combating terrorism. Since then, the relationship between immigration policy and national security has deepened, and it will become even more important in an increasingly globalized world.

The literature on immigration policy, however, has not kept up with world events. First, most of it is country-specific, making comparisons of immigration policy between countries difficult. Second, it does little to explain how politics shapes immigration policy. Third, it pays strikingly little attention to concerns about security.

Nooruddin hopes to address these deficiencies in two ways. First, he is creating a cross-national database of immigration policy, coding policies on 90 variables such as:

- Restrictiveness. Is the policy based on absolute numbers or characteristics of the immigrant?
- Purpose. Does the policy seek to assimilate new citizens or simply provide additional labor?
- Conditions. Does the policy require things like permits, registration, or finger-printing?
- Enforcement. Does the policy target employers or immigrants?
- Punishments. Do sanctions for not following the policy include fines or deportation?

Second, Nooruddin is conducting interviews with embassy officials in the United Arab Emirates and India. The UAE was chosen because it uses a tremendous amount of expatriate labor; in fact, just 20 percent of its population is native. India has long been a net exporter of population, making the "brain drain" of great concern to policy-makers.

Nooruddin plans to use the results of this project as the basis for a proposal to the National Science Foundation to extend the database back to 1945.



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